

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00

NSC-05 PA-02 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-15 ACDA-10 SAJ-01

ERDA-07 SAM-01 IO-13 OMB-01 TRSE-00 /102 W

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R 061917Z AUG 76

FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3736

INFO USMISSION NATO

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

USDEL SALT TWO GENEVA

USNMR SHAPE

USCINCEUR

DIA WASHDC

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 22971

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: MILI, PARM, UR, FR

SUBJECT: PRESS COVERAGE OF SOVIET ARMS DEVELOPMENTS

1. SUMMARY: THIS WEEK TWO MAJOR PARIS PAPERS FRONT-PAGED ARTICLES CONCERNING SOVIET ARMS DEVELOPMENTS AND SPECULATED AS TO LONG TERM SOVIET PLANS. FIGARO STRUCK A SOMEWHAT PESSIMISTIC NOTE. THE FOLLOWING DAY LE MONDE PRODUCED A MORE BALANCED ARTICLE. END SUMMARY.

2. AUGUST 4 FIGARO CARRIED AN ARTICLE BY JEROME DUMOULIN HEADLINED, "SOVIET MIRVED MISSILES POINTED AT EUROPE." DRAWING ON EXCHANGES CONCERNING SS-X-20 AT THE DEPARTMENT PRESS BRIEFING AND SUBSEQUENT DEPARTMENT STATEMENTS, DUMOULIN USED THE SS-X-20 AS A PEG ON WHICH TO HANG A SOMEWHAT PESSIMISTIC ARTICLE. IGNORING THE FACT THAT IT HAS BEEN PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE THAT THE SS-X-20 WILL BE BOTH MOBILE AND MIRVED AT LEAST SINCE THE PUBLICATION OF THE DOD POSTURE STATEMENT IN JANUARY, DUMOULIN DESCRIBED THE NEWS AS A LIFTING OF THE VEIL BY THE AMERICANS ON

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THE SOVIET NUCLEAR PANOPLY. CALLING THE 20 DANGEROUSLY

VERSATILE, DUMOULIN POINTS OUT THAT IT CAN THREATEN EUROPE, CHINA AND THE WEST COAST OF THE US. HE ALSO NOTES THAT WITH THE ADDITION OF ANOTHER STAGE, THE SYSTEM COULD BE GIVEN INTERCONTINENTAL CAPABILITY. HE CONTINUES THAT THE 20 AND THE CRUISE MISSILE BEGIN TO BLUR THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN ICBM'S AND WEAPONS OF IESSER RANGES.

3. DUMOULIN REFERS TO THE ACDA ANNUAL REPORT AND THEN QUOTES VERBATIM THE DEPARTMENT'S PRESS BRIEFING TRANSCRIPT CONCERNING THE SS-X-20 AND THE SUBSEQUENT DEPARTMENT STATEMENT. DUMOULIN CONTINUES THAT THE 20 IS THE SECOND SOVIET MOBILE BALLISTIC MISSILE SYSTEM, IMPLYING THAT THE SS-X-16 IS ALREADY DEPLOYED IN A MOBILE MODE.

4. DUMOULIN THEN ASKS IF THE SOVIETS ARE TRYING "AGAIN" TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE 1972 SALT INTERIM AGREEMENT WHICH LIMITS THE NUMBER OF STRATEGIC DELIVERY SYSTEMS AND OF MIRVED MISSILES (SIC). DUMOULIN ALSO STATES THAT THE SOVIET MILITARY SUPERIORITY IN EUROPE IS AT THIS POINT CONSIDERABLE.

5. THE FOLLOWING DAY MICHEL TATU WRITING IN LE MONDE OPENED HIS ARTICIE BY ASKING WHAT THE SOVIET GOAL IN THE STRATEGIC FIELD IS. TATU REVIEWS THE SS-X-20 ISSUE AND ALSO RECENT ACCOUNTS OF SOVIET CIVIL DEFENSE EFFORTS. TATU CONTINUES THAT THE RECENT NEWS OF SOVIET ARMS DEVELOPMENTS HAS REVIVED PESSIMISTIC COMMENTARY ON SOVIET MILITARY STRATEGY. HE STATES THAT THE "CONFIRMATION" FROM WASHINGTON THAT THE SS-X-20 WILL BE MIRVED AND MOBILE INCREASES THE THREAT TO WESTERN EUROPE.

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NOTE: AS PRINTED IN LE MONDE THE SYSTEM WAS LISTED AS THE SS-X-10 (SIC). END NOTE. TATU POINTS OUT THAT FRANCE AND OTHER NATIONS WERE AWARE OF THE SS-X-20 CHARACTERISTICS IN ADVANCE. HE POINTS OUT THAT THE 20 SHOULD NOT AFFECT THE SALT NEGOTIATIONS BECAUSE THEY DEAL WITH INTERCONTINENTAL SYSTEMS. HE ALSO POINTS OUT THAT THE NUCLEAR THREATS TO EUROPE FROM THE USSR ARE NOT NEW BUT DATE FROM THE SOVIET MRBM AND IRBM DEPLOYMENTS IN THE 1960'S.

6. TURNING TO STORIES OF SOVIET EFFORTS IN CIVIL DEFENSE (CHALFONT, SULZBERGER, THE ECONOMIST, AND LEON GOURE), TATU SAYS THESE HAVE INDICATED THAT THE SOVIETS ARE SEEKING TO DEVELOP A CAPABILITY TO MINIMIZE DAMAGE FROM A WESTERN RETALIATORY STRIKE. TATU CITES ACCOUNTS OF HARDENED MISSILE SILOS, PLANS FOR EVACUATION OF CITIES, AND DISPERSION OF INDUSTRY. WERE THIS CIVIL DEFENSE SYSTEM TO BE PERFECTED, TATU OPINES, MUTUAL ASSURED UNCLASSIFIED

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DESTRUCTION COULD BE THREATENED.

7. IN CONCLUSION TATU QUESTIONS WHETHER A NORMAL SOVIET LEADERSHIP COULD CONTEMPLATE IN COLD BLOOD A FIRST STRIKE AGAINST THE FORMIDABLE AMERICAN AND WESTERN ARSENAL. EVEN IF AN EVACUATION OF THE CITIES COULD EFFECTIVELY PROTECT THE SOVIET POPULATION, WHAT COULD THE SOVIET POPULATION FIND AFTER THE CITIES WERE ENTIRELY DESTROYED? WHAT COULD MERIT SUCH A SACRIFICE?

8. COMMENT: WHETHER THE TWO ARTICLES INDICATE A REVIVAL OF INTEREST IN SOVIET WEAPONS DEVELOPMENTS WHICH COULD THREATEN FRANCE OR MERELY ECHO THE RECENT EXCHANGES IN WASHINGTON REMAINS TO BE SEEN. IT MAY BE THAT THERE

IS WITHIN THE FRENCH DEFENSE COMMUNITY A GROWING PERCEPTION THAT SALT LIMITATIONS MAY FREE ADDITIONAL SOVIET RESOURCES FOR USE WITH SYSTEMS THAT IMPACT ON THE THEATER. AT ANY RATE FRENCH PUBLIC ATTENTION IS AGAIN BEING FOCUSED ON THE POSSIBILITY OF AN INCREASING SOVIET MILITARY THREAT.
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